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ABSTRACT

In explorations of American literature in high school, the tradition of sailormen and the sea is generally not considered independently or distinctly because the sea is not viewed as a separate region of thought. Songs of the whalers and sailors of the sea and the inland waterways are frequently related to the historical and spatial context of their regions rather than to a transcending "American Spirit." A closer look at the folk-songs of the sea and the inland waterways reveals a special blend of the national concept of self, the national psyche, the historical experience, and the liberating, egalitarian, and transcending qualities of the sea. It can reveal a basic unity appropriate for a new literary approach. Particular characteristics of the American experience which can serve as analytic guides for developing a holistic view of the seafaring experience are listed under the following headings: Pragmatic, Freedom, Jeffersonian Democratic, Jacksonian Democratic, Protestant Ethic, the Puritan Tradition, Manifest Destiny, Search for Democracy, Make the World Safe for Democracy, Search for the Good Life, Pluralistic Society and Heritage, and American as the "New Man." After other features relating to traditional sea songs in general are sifted out, these constructs can be seen as the unique characteristics of the American Spirit in seafaring songs. Also included is an original poem in folksong style called "Melville's Moby Dick as a Metaphor of the Human Experience; The White Whale," and "Some Types of Seafaring Folksongs to be used For Analysis" (A chart). (BZ)

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A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE AMERICAN SEA EXPERIENCE: AMERICAN SEAFARING SONGS AS MARITIME EXPRESSIONS OF THE UNIQUE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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1. RATIONALE

In explorations of American literature in high school, the tradition of sailormen and the sea in American is generally not considered independently or distinctly because the sea is not viewed as a separate region in American thought. Life of the sailormen and seafaring ways often are included in the context of authors of adjacent regions of the East, South, Mid-West and West rather than having a special unity of their own. Songs of the whalers and sailors of the sea, and the inland waterways, e.g. the St. Lawrence, Hudson, Shenandoah, Mississippi, Rio Grande, Sacramento and Puget Sound, are frequently related to the historical and spatial contexts of their regions rather than to a transcending "American Spirit."

A closer look at the folk-songs of the sea, and the inland waterways in the USA may reveal a special blend of: the American concept of self, the American psyche, the historical experience, and the liberating, egalitarian and transcending qualities of the sea. It also may reveal a basic unity appropriate for a new literary approach. American folksongs of sailormen might serve as a data base for developing a holistic approach to the American experience.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AS ANALYTIC GUIDES FOR DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC CONCEPT OF THE AMERICAN SEAFARING EXPERIENCE

Significant analytical constructs of the American experience for use with seafaring folk-songs are:

2.1 Pragmatic - Dealing with solving problems and finding solutions rather than developing rational plans, long-term structure and programs.

2.2 Freedom - View of freedom not as a gift but as a victory, to be won again and again by combat of succeeding generations

2.3 Jeffersonian Democratic - Agrarian - Belief in the virtue of the Yeoman farmer and the man who tills the soil

2.4 Jacksonian Democratic - egalitarian belief in the virtue of the common man, the untutored and unlettered

2.5 Protestant Ethic - Belief in the virtue of work as religious fulfillment, work as salvation and enhancing, thrift is virtue

2.6 The Puritan Tradition - Religion, a demanding and moral God, Man as a servant of God, good religious practice rewarded by a strong and powerful God. Good works bring salvation.

2.7 Manifest Destiny - View of the destiny of Americans to master and control the continent without fear of any foreign power on the continent, view of national destiny to control all the land between the seas (From sea to shining sea)

2.8 Search for Democracy - After winning freedom, to find the way to guard the dignity of the individual through political means

2.9 Make the World Safe for Democracy - a view of the American democratic experiment as universally applicable and validated by adoption by others.

2.10 Search for the Good Life - The social and political traditions. Schools, religion and science as laboratories for the quest of the good life rooted in freedom and democracy

2.11 Pluralistic Society and Heritage - The USA as a nation of immigrants and its pluralistic origins, as the basis for American greatness. Melting pot vs. distinctive roots

2.12 American as "The New Man" - A view of Americans as different and superior to the old world from which they came. View of the new world as a purifying and cleansing element on the human spirit as opposed to the corrupt,stratified "old world" of Europe.

3. CLEARING THE DISSONANCE: THE ANALYTICAL MODEL APPLIED TO CHARACTERISTICS OF AMERICAN SEAFARING SONGS

The characteristics of the American experience are not easily discernable nor evident in all American seafaring folk-songs. There are additional features of these folk songs that relate to general features of traditional folk-songs. These other features should be sifted out to retain, whenever available, the unique characteristics of the American Spirit in seafaring songs.

Some of these dissonant general features to be sifted out are:

1. Seafaring folk-songs may be work related - as sea chanities;
2. Seafaring folk-songs may relate the general human longing for human relationships and love;
3. Seafaring folk-songs may relate the general sexual and emotional releases characteristics of shore leaves and stays;
4. Seafaring folk-songs may relate the difficulties of life at sea.

In eliminating these dissonant elements we should be able to pare down to the unique American perception of the World and the American spiritual and historical experience.

4. MELVILLE'S MOBY DICK AS A METAPHOR OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE; THE WHITE WHALE - by Moses Stambler

I. - Man doth look for the white white whale, wherever he may be;
   - But the whale isn't there, on the surface so bare;
   He lies at the bottom of the sea.

II. - I boarded a ship in Portsmouth Town, the Pequoid a whale was she;
   - 'Twas a dark and drizzly night in my soul,
   When we sailed for the waters free.

III.- A storm did lash our ship when we left, and some men wished
to return;
- But the captain did cry, "If we go back we'll die, on the Sordid
rocks of hell we'll all burn."

IV. - The sun rose up from the depths of the sea, and had plunged back
many times more;
- When we came to the ground where whale sought and found,
All of those who rejected the shore.

V. - Look yee to the East and look yee to the West,
Look yee to the windward and the lee;
- Set the magnet of your heart on the snow white whale, and
shout when his spout you do see.

VII.- "There's a whale, there's a whale," The lookout did call,
"And his whitness is piercing the Blue;"
- "To your stations the cry, if it's destined we die,
Let's go down like the best of men do."

VI. - Part yee waters, furrow paths to hell,
The mirror of life must be seen;
- Deeply etched on its face, is the whale that we chase,
While the ghost of our ship haunts his dream

VIII.-Locked in combat to the death, while fate bing-bonged the bell;
- Locked in combat to the death, united resurrected down in hell.

IX. - Churn dark waters oer the sunken ship, and part yee waves
on the blue;
- But the record is found, in the blood stained ground;
- In the courage of the men who passed on through.

X. - Man doth look for the white, white whale wherever he may be;
- But the whale isn't there on, the surface so bare,
He lies at the bottom of the sea.

5. CURRICULUM APPLICATIONS

Objective #1: To understand the sailor's experience as part of the broader human experience and the human conditions experienced by sailors all over the world. The Human Dissonance.

Question #1: What experiences did American sailors have and how did they view these in a way similar to experiences and feelings of sailors in other parts of the world?

Objective #2: To understand the special and unique experiences of American sailormen related to American values, the "American Spirit," and American historical conditions on a national and regional scale

Question #2: What does this seafaring folksong tell you about the unique:
- "American Spirit"
- National historical context
- Regional historical context

6. Some Types of Seafaring Folksongs to be Used for Analysis

TYPES OF SONGS	SOME EXAMPLES
6.1 Shanteyman songs Topsail	"Santy and," "Sally Brown," "The Maid of Amsterdam," "Sacramento," "The Rio Grande," "Santa Anna," "Heaven Away My Johnny," "Blow the Man Down"
6.2 Short-Haul Capstain	"Shenandoah," "Haul Away Joe," "Away Rio," "The Drunken Sailor," "Sacramento," "Rolling Home"
6.3 California Clipper Ship Songs - 1850's	"Sacramento," "Rolling Home"
6.4 Forecastlesong Gripe songs	"Blow Ye Winds," "Hullabaloo Belay"
6.5 Inland Waterway Songs (1840's)	"Erie Canal"
6.6 Great Lake Saiwe Songs Lake Barts	"The Bilger"
6.7 Central Valley River Songs (Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee) (1800-1900)	"Shenandoah," "Banks of the Ohio"
6.8 Whaling & Fishing (1825-1860) Battlesongs	"Greenland Fishery," "The Whale," "Song of the Fishes," "High Barbaree," "The Constitution and the Guerriere," "The Hornet & and the Peacock."

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